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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

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May 19, 2006

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012-3265

**FY 2006-07 UNMET CRITICAL NEEDS OF THE HUMAN
RELATIONS COMMISSION**

Dear Supervisors:

The Commission on Human Relations requests a total of \$547,000 for FY 2006-07 to fund four unmet critical needs for your consideration during budget deliberations.

During this current year, we have seen a historic number of incidents of campus interracial violence. Add to this the community controversies over immigration and marriage that have heightened intergroup tensions. Yet several cities in the county have reduced or eliminated staff support for human relations commissions. All this has impacted community intergroup relations. We know that 58% of county residents deemed race relations to be 'poor' or 'not so good,' which is up from 53% in 2003. (PPIC Special Survey of LA County, March 2005)

Funding these needs is vital to ensure that the County can address key human relations needs, in particular, our agency's efforts to transform schools and communities facing intergroup tensions, conflict and violence; to obtain non-County funding to support our program work. Meeting our needs will also give us the capacity to improve our performance measurement and evaluation systems. These needs are set forth in our budget request and not addressed in the Chief Administrative Officer's recommended budget for the Commission.

The Commission respectfully requests your consideration of the following four priority requests, which are needed to enable the

County to address key human relations needs. They align with the County strategic plan goals of Service Excellence, Organizational Effectiveness, Public Safety, Children and Families.

1. Zerohour Schools Project

Amount: \$287,000

Positions: 1.0

Funding Source: Ongoing Net County Cost/One-Time Funding

We need to strengthen our efforts to address the profound crisis in interethnic and intergroup relations in county schools, which continues to erupt, and where no violence has broken out, usually sits just beneath the surface. There was an unprecedented number of interracial and interethnic conflicts and violence on school campuses during this fiscal year: 37. This is up from seven schools in the prior year. Affected county areas include South L.A. San Fernando Valley, the Antelope Valley, and Long Beach areas.

Our Zerohour Program seeks to take targeted schools beyond ad hoc, short-term actions, and help them take major steps towards more a deeper, wholistic approach, institutionalizing human relations elements into standard classroom curricula, campus life, student leadership and teacher training, parent education and involvement, and technical assistance to school administrators. The ultimate goal is to bring about institutional changes within the public school system's culture and close the achievement gap by propelling the transformation of "zerohour"-targeted schools into human relations models that can be replicated around the county, and give our youth a chance to be equipped not just to survive, but to thrive, in a multicultural county.

We are requesting 1.0 staff position to serve as county-wide Zerohour Schools Coordinator (\$87,000 in S&EB). Due to the increased workload relating to school crisis response, no staff member has been available to dedicate more than a small fraction of their time to this project. This position would lead the zerohour schools project, which would get schools beyond ad hoc short-term actions aimed at managing crisis.

The Zerohour Schools project provides recognition and incentives for schools that take major steps towards institutionalizing human relations elements into standard classroom curricula, campus life, teacher training, parent education, and technical assistance to school administrators, with a focus upon facilitating institutional changes within the public school system's culture and propelling the transformation of zerohour-targeted schools into human relations models.

The total request also includes office expenses (\$5,000 in S&S), which includes office set-up and supplies, and funding (\$190,000 in S&S) to contract for human relations trainers and services, five regional youth conferences, teacher trainings, administrators' conference, parent education/involvement, youth public education campaign materials, and other programmatic materials for targeted zerohour schools.

This funding would provide approximately a 9% increase in staffing for youth/schools programs. This new component of our school infrastructure-building program is critical to preventive strategies for safety that advance the social and emotional well-being of children and families. (Goal 5, Strategy 4 of the County Strategic Plan)

2. Strengthening Community Capacity to Resolve Conflict: Human Relations Collaboratives

Amount: \$99,000

Positions: 1.0

Source: Ongoing Net County Cost/One-Time Funding

This funding is needed to create or sustain critical partnerships that can avert severe human and race relations crises in targeted regions of the county experiencing high levels of intergroup tension and/or violence, including Florence-Firestone, San Fernando Valley, Santa Clarita Valley, Hawaiian Gardens/Artesia. With this funding the Commission can convene and nurture new collaboratives, and strengthen existing ones, in those targeted regions of the county. These collaboratives involve key stakeholder institutions such as schools, law enforcement, community based organizations, the local human relations commission, and relevant county departments. These collaboratives will regularly meet to identify and address human relations issues as they arise, thereby creating a mechanism to prevent crises in intergroup relations, and most importantly, to build relationships among key individuals and institutions in the targeted region.

The requested funding includes a Human Relations Collaboratives Coordinator (1.0 FTE Senior Human Relations Consultant, \$87,000 in S&EB) to convene and nurture new and strengthen existing community collaboratives in targeted regions of the county. With some funding for office expenses (\$5,000) and community facilitators (\$7,000 in S&S), this position will work to coordinate staff and key stakeholder institutions such as schools, law enforcement, community based organizations, etc., to regularly meet to identify and address human relations issues as they arise, thereby creating a mechanism to prevent crises in intergroup relations and build relationships among key individuals and institutions.

This change represents about 75% of the staffing and resources for this project, which will draw upon other Commission program staff doing school work to assist. (Goal 5, Strategy 6, and Goal 6, Strategy 3 of the County Strategic Plan)

3. Leveraging Existing Resources: Resource Development Consultant:

Amount: \$30,000

Positions: 0

Source: Ongoing Net County Cost

We cannot realistically expect county communities and schools to be able to bring about the needed changes to address intergroup tensions and conflicts, and to transform institutional practices and culture, without resources.

This is a contract position to identify and pursue grant funding for Commission programs, including those listed above. Previous PIF funding of \$50,000 for a grant writer, which has run out, resulted in \$145,000 in grant revenue for three consecutive years, totaling \$435,000, for our programmatic work, with priority on the program areas in our critical needs requests. We would seek to do as in the past with the County's Interagency Gang Task Force, i.e., to combine this amount with other departments and agencies with a related mission that has only partial funding. (Would further all county strategic goal and strategies cited above)

4. Performance Evaluation and Measurement Systems Project

Amount: \$111,000

Positions: 1.0

Source: Ongoing Net County Cost

It is critical for the Commission to have a workable system which measures and evaluates the effectiveness of our agency's programs if we are to 1) make our programs stronger and have greater impact; 2) show the benefits our programs deliver to the public and funders; and 3) convince school, local government and other institutional powerbrokers of the need for human relations infrastructure. However, it is one of the most difficult ongoing challenges for human relations agencies, due to the nature of our work. Current levels and skills set of staffing is inadequate. This funding will result in the design, development, implementation and ongoing county-wide coordination of the Commission's operational and programmatic evaluative and measurement efforts. It will establish data collection systems and a collaborative process for continual improvement of measures, and will assist us in our customer service and satisfaction surveys and other measurement tools.

Funding would include one full-time Project Director position (\$91,000 in S&EB) which would direct and manage the design, development, implementation and ongoing county-wide coordination of the Commission's operational and programmatic evaluative and measurement efforts. It includes stipends for graduate student interns (\$15,000 in S&S) to assist the Project Director; and office expenses (\$5,000 in S&S), which includes costs for computer, desk, chair, office set-up and supplies. (Goal 1, Strategy 2, and Goal 3, Strategy 4 of the County Strategic Plan).

Conclusion

Funding these requests are critical if we are to provide meaningful change for our youth, communities, schools, police and other key stakeholders in Los Angeles County. Our youth have a right to be safe from hallway bullying, bias or discrimination or hate violence; to focus on achieving academically while expanding their social and emotional intelligence by accessing the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to resolve conflict, mediate issues, and interface in positive ways with others. County residents need to live in communities that are not just safe, but socially healthy. They need the chance to build relationships of trust through regular engagement among key institutions that can handle the conflicts that occur between residents and police, schools and local government. The over-arching goal of these efforts will be to increase the capacity of the County's school districts to go beyond crisis response, to prevent crises and provide our youth and society at large a better future. Finally, it is essential to pursue any existing resources, and to be able to demonstrate the impact of these programs.

If you have any questions or need additional information, you may contact us at 213-974-7601.

Sincerely,



Robin S. Toma
Executive Director

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
Sachi Hamai, Executive Officer
Commissioners, Human Relations Commission